

Lander Field Office Plans to Conduct Juniper Thinning as a part of the South Wind River Mule Deer Habitat Improvement Project

Project Summary

The Bureau of Land Management's Lander Field Office is proposing to treat approximately 516 acres of juniper and limber pine woodland in the vicinity of the Derby Dome oilfield and Cedar Ridge approximately 12 miles southeast of Lander, Wyoming. The proposed project area is located on the toe slopes of the eastern side of Cedar Ridge, more specifically in portions of Sections 17,18,20,28,33, and 34 of Township 32 N. and Range 98 W and on the rolling hills southeast of Derby Dome that includes portions of Sections 3,4,9, and 10 of Township 31N Range 98W. The project would be implemented on lands administered by the BLM.

The area consists of seedling, sapling, and vigorous mature sized juniper and limber pine trees that have expanded into productive shrubland areas in the absence of fire. The density of the existing junipers and limber pines is currently around 360 live tree stems to the acre. Most of the trees within the areas proposed to be treated are 100 years old and younger, evidence that fire historically removed junipers from the area, while trees on the rocky ridges that are not identified for treatment survived past fire events and are generally several hundred years old. Within the proposed project perimeters, about 90% of the existing live conifers would be cut and mulched using tracked machinery.

This treatment would be conducted by contractors employed by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Implementation would take place during the summer and fall months of 2008. The objectives of this project are to: 1) Remove younger age class juniper and limber pine from productive shrubland habitat, 2) Reduce hazardous natural fuels loading in shrubland areas with high density of junipers, and 3) improve wildlife habitat by promoting the transition of the existing dense, young age class juniper and limber pine stands back to a shrub and associated herbaceous species dominated site.

Issues

Juniper and limber pine is an important vegetation community for wildlife habitat and visual aesthetics. The lack of large fires in these areas in the past has resulted in expansion of the juniper into shrublands that are important to mule deer and other wildlife species. While juniper woodlands are important to an assortment of wildlife species, the loss of productive shrublands adjacent to these woodland sites reduces the habitat diversity across the range where species like mule deer live. Removing the identified young age class juniper and limber pine stands will enhance the wildlife habitat characteristics and promote shrub and herbaceous species growth after the cutting treatment.

This topographic map displays the F.D.R. Ridge area, characterized by brown contour lines indicating elevation. Four specific parcels are highlighted with red outlines and labeled with their respective acreages: 73 acres, 30 acres, 129 acres, and 284 acres. The map also shows several water bodies, including Flat Creek, Derby Creek, and the F.D.R. Ridge. Other geographical features include the F.D.R. Ridge, F.D.R. Ridge, and F.D.R. Ridge. The map is divided into sections by black lines, and various other labels such as '73 acres', '30 acres', '129 acres', and '284 acres' are present.